

free calls for information and assistance were turned away each day. Hundreds of thousands of ordinary Americans were inconvenienced, or had to temporarily forego benefits for which the Government requires things like Social Security cards, because we could not reach a budget agreement.

And the problems did not stop there. Some of our most vulnerable people suffered from the Government shutdown: 13 million AFDC recipients, 273,000 foster care children, over 100,000 children receiving adoption assistance services and over 100,000 Head Start children had their services delayed. And I have not even mentioned the 9 million Americans whose vacations and outings were ruined because they were turned away from our national parks and museums.

Mr. President, we must prevent this situation from occurring ever again. The Government shutdown caused inconvenience, occasional trauma, and a wide-spread increase in the cynicism of the American people, now more convinced than ever that our executive and legislative branches of Government are incapable of doing their jobs.

We can do our jobs, Mr. President, and we must see to it that we do them without allowing the Federal Government to again shut down. We must come to grips with the fact that, under current rules, Government shutdowns are a risk that must be addressed. 1995 was not the first year in which we had a Government shutdown. Over the last 20 years there have been numerous such occurrences, and even more numerous stopgap funding bills passed at the last minute to prevent them.

Part of the problem Mr. President, is our complicated budget process. As currently constituted, this process seems designed to confuse the people as they seek to understand what we are doing and exactly who is holding up agreement. In addition, Mr. President, the American people have elected divided government. They have chosen a President with one set of priorities, and a majority in Congress that in some ways has significantly different priorities.

As a result of a convoluted process and conflicting priorities, we are in the midst of a 2-year budget stalemate. I sincerely hope that the budget agreement announced on Friday will produce tax relief for the American people, a balanced budget by 2002, sufficient funding for our national defense, and much-needed spending restraint. If it includes these things, Mr. President, we may at last see an end to the budget stalemate.

But we cannot sit idly by in the hope that all will be well. We can and must strive in the meantime to ensure that this year no shutdown will occur even if the budget deal breaks down.

That is why I am urging my colleagues to support provisions in this continuing resolution that would put a safety net under our Government, and under the American people. It would

create a statutory continuing resolution, triggered only if the appropriations acts do not become law or if there is no governing continuing resolution in place. This legislation would ensure that the Government does not shut down by funding Government programs next year at 98 percent.

What this means, Mr. President, is that the Federal Government, in case of a budget impasse, would be funded at a level sufficient to continue essential services—sufficient to prevent any real inconvenience to the American people—without undermining the incentive to pass appropriations bills on time.

It is my hope that we will not need this provision. It is my conviction that we should enact it so that the American people will continue to receive the services they expect from their Federal Government even if there is a budget impasse. I urge my colleagues to support this important, safety net provision.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate on the amendment?

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my pending amendment be set aside temporarily.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### AMENDMENT NO. 235

(Purpose: To assure sufficient funding for Essential Air Service under the Rural Air Service Survival Act)

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Alaska [Mr. STEVENS], for Mr. KERREY, for himself, and Mr. DORGAN, proposes an amendment numbered 235.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

At the appropriate place in the bill insert the following new language:

SEC. . Section 45301(b)(1)(A) of title 49, United States Code, is amended inserting before the semicolon "and at least \$50,000,000 in FY 1998 and every year thereafter".

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, it is my understanding that the proponents of amendments Nos. 95 and 96 agree to this language. This new language is to be a substitute for the proposals before the body regarding international flight user fees. It has been agreed to by both sides and, therefore, is ready for passage.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 235) was agreed to.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we now go into a period for routine morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### U.S. FOREIGN OIL CONSUMPTION FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 2

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, the American Petroleum Institute reports that for the week ending May 2, the United States imported 8,106,000 barrels of oil each day, 805,000 barrels more than the 7,301,000 imported during the same week 1 year ago.

Americans relied on foreign oil for 55.9 percent of their needs last week, and there are no signs that the upward spiral will abate. Before the Persian gulf War, the United States obtained approximately 45 percent of its oil supply from foreign countries. During the Arab oil embargo in the 1970's, foreign oil accounted for only 35 percent of America's oil supply.

Anybody else interested in restoring domestic production of oil—by U.S. producers using American workers? Politicians had better ponder the economic calamity sure to occur in America if and when foreign producers shut off our supply—or double the already enormous cost of imported oil flowing into the United States—now 8,106,000 barrels a day.

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Tuesday, May 6, the Federal debt stood at \$5,337,028,737,421.51.

One year ago, May 6, 1996, the Federal debt stood at \$5,096,257,000,000.

Five years ago, May 6, 1992, the Federal debt stood at \$3,882,040,000,000.

Ten years ago, May 6, 1987, the Federal debt stood at \$2,278,744,000,000.

Fifteen years ago, May 6, 1982, the Federal debt stood at \$1,057,151,000,000, which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion (4,279,877,737,421.51) during the past 15 years.

#### TOBACCO TAXES

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, last Friday's Wall Street Journal published the results of an April 1997 poll it conducted with NBC News. One of the questions in the survey deserves special attention.